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AUTHOR Arter, Judith A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the level and nature of Title I Evaluation Technical Assistance services provided in 14 western states over the past six years. The primary data source is the routine information collected by the Technical Assistance Center (TAC) on all contacts with clients. Points made as a result of this review are focused on what the data do and do not show about the development over time of technical assistance strategies and content. In sum, TACs have enjoyed a high level of impact and success with clients, much of which is not documented in numbers. Elements of the TAC structure which have contributed to success are a client-centered approach; flexibility in service provision, content and staffing; good needs assessment and awareness approaches; face-to-face contact; responsiveness; an initial focus and impetus for participation; and high quality information and materials. Other important factors are the perception of TACs as a resource, not a monitoring agency, and funding which allowed good quality personnel and materials. (PN)

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Six Years of Title I Evaluation Technical Assistance: Past Strategies and Measurement of Effectiveness

Judith A. Arter

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Center

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Six Years of Title I Evaluation Technical Assistance: Past Strategies and Measurement of Effectiveness

Judith A. Arter, NWREL

The Title I (now Chapter 1) Evaluation Techincal Assistance Centers (TACs) have now been in existence for six years. It is useful at this point for us to summarize past experience in planning and delivering technical assistance and review methods which have been used to document service. The purpose of this paper is to describe the level and nature of services provided in fourteen western states over the past six years. The primary data source is the routine information collected by the NWREL TACs on all contacts with clients. Points to be made as a result of reviewing what these data do and do not show are the development of technical assistance strategies over time, how different strategies and philosophies result in different types of services being provided, how accountability and effectiveness have been measured in the past, how and why the content of assistance has evolved over time, and what some of the past sources have been in shaping local perception of what evaluation is and what it can be used for.

In order to explore these changes I will first describe four areas in which decisions must be made in order to implement a technical assistance strategy. These I will call the elements of a technical assistance strategy. Then I will look at the various factors which affect the development of a technical assistance strategy. Finally, I will examine past data collection methods and how the information collected does and does not reflect trends in services and changes in technical assistance strategies and forces

Elements of a Technical Assistance Strategy

Relationship to Clients. One important area of strategy is the position which is taken with respect to clients. Will one's role be proactive or reactive? What is the balance between (a) suggesting topics and directions v. responding to requests, and (b) supporting v. attempting to alter the local decision making process? Will one's role be mainly one of consultant or will the attempt be made to do some of the actual work? What is the line between assisting and doing evaluations for the client? Is the aim to build local capacity to do specific or general tasks or to be an on-going resource to build local capacity and assist with work?

These questions have implications for the nature of training provided, how outreach and awareness will be conducted, what materials will be developed, the type of personnel to hire, etc. In general, the TACs have taken a client-centered approach to technical assistance both because of Federal policy and because of its perceived effectiveness. A client-centered approach encourages the client to define their own needs and chart the direction for services. This involves TAC in the role of advisor and consultant--assisting clients to define thier needs and desires and assisting in their resolution. Local capacity building has always been part of this.

Paper presented at AERA, Montreal, 1983.

Content Coverage. TACs also need to decide the areas in which technical assistance will be provided. What is the goal of the technical assistance? What kinds of knowledge are to be transmitted? One issue in programs such as Title I (now Chapter 1) is the degree to which compliance is emphasized and how this will fit in with more general topics. Another important decision is between technical purity and local practicality. Instruction could focus on theory in order to provide general training across many areas, or it could be more practically and situationally focused. A third decision relates to local use concerns. How will local use of evaluation results be promoted? Is the concern local use, national use or local use of national information? A fourth area centers on process versus outcome evaluation. What is useful? What is required? How does this relate to goals?

TAC goals have always been in three areas:

- To assist SEAs and LEAs to adopt and implement the TIERS.
- To encourage SEAs and LEAs to improve the quality of data used in program evaluation.
- To help SEAs and LEAs to develop evaluations that are useful for local decision making, and to help them learn to apply the evaluation results for that purpose.

As we shall see, the actual expression of these in terms of content has changed over time.

Mechanisms for Technical Assistance. This area of decisions regarding technical strategies relates to the logistics for technical assistance delivery. Will on-site visits be promoted or will assistance occur mainly by telephone and mail? Will emphasis be on large scale awareness workshops which involve persons from many LEAs, or will individual LEA contacts be encouraged? What mix of workshops and individual consultations will be promoted and how will one decide what kind of on-site service to provide? What kind of process will be developed for eliciting requests for services, responding to requests for services and following up on contacts? How will continuity be established?

The TACs are allowed and encouraged through their contracts to provide services through four modes--workshops, on-site consultations, telephone consultations and mail. The actual mix of these has changed through time.

Internal Organization. Internal Organization involves how the TAC will be set up in order to provide technical assistance. Decisions have to be made in the areas of staffing, support services, staff development, relationship to the parent organization, relationship to the funding agency, extent of involvement in peripheral activities (such as technical investigations) which might assist the mission, whether to make state assignments to individuals, whether to make content area area assignments to individuals, etc.

The internal organization and operation of TACs has varied between TACs and over time within the same TAC. Differences have occured in the use of state assignments, commitment to TAC goals, responsiveness to contract officer needs, etc.

Factors Affecting the Development of a Technical Assistance Strategy.

There are at least six categories of influences which can alter the way in which technical assistance is organized and delivered.

Federal Policy. The original direction and guidelines for the technical assistance strategy often comes about through an RFP--certain things must be done. For TACs the general or broad goals of service were defined, the allowable modes of service delivery were specified, allowable tasks were outlined, and restrictions on services were identified. Other influences of Federal policy are not as direct. These include the philosophical climate in the Federal government (e.g. emphasis on social programs v. emphasis on defense, Federal control v. local control, push for local capacity building, push for decentralization). Still other influences are situational--the need for specific kinds of information at certain times, and specific direction to do certain kinds of activities.

The Situation in the States--SEA. The technical assistance strategy taken in a state can vary widely depending on such things as the training needs and level of sophistication of client groups, the technical assistance that is already available in the state, the size and complexity of the state, state policies toward TAC services, and clients' perceptions of their own needs.

The Situation in the States--LEA. The type of LEAs served can also influence the technical assistance strategy taken. Factors at the LEA level include money available for evaluation, expertise of personnel, personnel time which can be devoted to evaluation activities, level of interest, and remoteness of the district. Small districts serve the fewest children but also typically need the most assistance. In large districts more children could be affected by assistance, but there is less need for assistance from an outside source.

Money. Funding, both for the agency providing the technical assistance and for the client agencies, can have a profound effect on technical assistance strategy. Influences can be in the areas of emphasis on telephone and mail contacts rather than site visits, the amount of assistance to an area, materials production and dissemination, exchange of ideas through regional meetings, the quality of personnel, and the amount of time which can be devoted to increasing staff skills.

TAC Personnel. The specific personnel at a technical assistance site has a major influence on the technical assistance strategy taken. Examples are areas of expertise, philosophical orientation, commitment to TAC goals, interpersonal skills, knowledge of SEAs and LEAs, responsiveness to Federal and state needs, and areas of interest.

Increases in Technical Knowledge. Changes in technology and technical knowledge about evaluation can result in changes in TAC approach and content.

Past Data Collection Efforts and What They Show

Data collection efforts concerning the TACs have had two goals --documentation and evaluation. Although never precisely articulated, the original information kept by TACs on their contacts seemed to be for purposes of documentation. This, as well as other information collection efforts also came to be used to judge TAC effectiveness and efficiency. In this section I will look at data which have been collected on TAC service delivery for the purpose of both documentation and evaluation. I will discuss the nature of the information collected, what it shows about trends in TAC services and service provision strategies, and what it does not show about trends in TAC services and service provision strategies.

TAC Records. TACs routinely collect information on all contacts with clients. Information common across the previous six years of technical assistance delivery includes date, mode of delivery, topics covered, number of clients served and a detailed description of the content of the contact. This information is provided to ED in monthly, yearly and three-year reports. Summaries of numbers of contacts, percent of contacts in each mode and number of clients for 1976-79 and 1979-82 are presented in Table 1. This information reflects only those contacts in which technical assistance was provided. Although planning and other contacts are of interest, reliable counts for 1976-79 in these areas are not available.

TABLE 1

Increases in Number of TAC Technical Assistance Contacts and Participants
Taken From Final Reports
1976-79 Versus 1979-82

		Workshops		Consultat.		Tel/Mail		
Region	Year	#	%	#	%	#	%	# Partic.
8	76-79	150	23%	229	35%	273	42%	4,500
	79-82	293	13%	364	16%	1584	71%	11,300
9	76-79	174	28%	182	29%	261	42%	5,725
	79-82	235	10%	473	19%	1751	71%	10,450
10	76-79	99	17%	98	17%	385	66%	N.A.
	79-82	269	14%	269	14%	1428	72%	7,557

Information in Table 1 shows that:

- The overall level of service (as measured by the number of contacts) has gone up between 300 and 400%.
- The greatest shift in serivce delivery mode has been away from workshops and consultations toward telephone and mail.
- The number of clients served approximately doubled between the first and second three-year contracts.

Table 2 compares general categories of technical assistance topics between 1976-79 and 1979-82. "TIERS" includes general information about TAC/TIERS, Models A, B and C, and sustained effects. "Testing" includes test selection and all other testing issues (e.g. functional level testing, test equating and test score conversion). "Other Topics" include such things as evaluating program implementation, JDRP, needs assessment, student selection, other models, microcomputers, data collection and analysis and evaluation reporting issues. Information is broken down in this manner because that is the way it was summarized for 1976-79. Cautions are (1) some of the information had to be estimated from bar graphs and (2) other of the information had to be estimated from duplicated counts of topics. Table 2 shows only the primary topic of each contact.

TABLE 2

Shift in Topics of TAC Technical Assistance Contacts
Taken From Final Reports
1976-79 Versus 1979-82

	Region 8		Region 9		Region 10	
Topic	1976-79	1979-82	1976-79	1979-82	1976-79	1979-82
TIERS	28%	15%	34%	17%	34%	16%
Testing	40%	34%	32%	16%	26%	20%
Other Topics	32%	51%	34%	67%	40%	64%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

This table shows that:

- During the first three years there was a greater focus on TIERS and testing issues. During the past three years this focus has broadened.
- The TACs in each of the three regions show slightly different patterns of topics. For example, Region 8 consistently assists with testing issues more than the other regions.

One problem with analyzing final report information is that data collection methods and topic definitions tended to shift over time. With this in mind, Arter (1982) compared 1980-81 Region 9 contacts with a reclassification of 1977-78 contacts using the more current scheme of topic classification. This reanalysis supports the interpretations of the above final report data in terms of increases in the level of service, the number of clients served and the shift in topics. The reanalysis did not support the finding that there was a shift toward telephone and mail contacts, but rather showed a shift away from workshops to consultations. This difference could be due to the fact that only one year was included in the latter study or that contacts from 1977-78 were recounted in the latter study.

ED Comparisons of TACs. The United States Education Department, which administers the TAC contracts, has consistently compiled the information provided by the TACs and compared it to other available information in order to examine TAC functioning and effectiveness. For example, one early effort to use the new (beginning in 1979-80) data collection system (which added person-presentation hours, a better classification of topics and more systematic recording of telephone calls and mail) involved information from November, 1979 to September, 1980.

This was presented by USOE at the TAC Director's meeting at the end of 1980. TACs were compared in terms of amount of funding, the level of Title 1 funding in the states each TAC served, FTE, number of contacts, number of clients, number of person-presentation hours, number of telephone and mail contacts, cost per person-presentation hour, and person-presentation hours divided by FTE. Results showed that:

- Using these cost comparisons, some TACs cost a lot more than others per person-presentation hour.
- The proportion of professional staff time used for actual presentation of information was very low (from 4% to 25%)
- TAC level of service was high but varied greatly across TACs.
- The relative emphasis placed on different technical assistance modes differed widely across TACs.

This was one report which was used to discuss what the numbers do not reflect in terms of TAC services and effectiveness. (Some of these considerations will be discussed in the next section.)

Evaluation of TAC Services By Outside Contractors. TAC services were evaluated twice by outside contractors. Both of these evaluations occurred in preparation for a new RFP for TAC services. The first outside evaluation took place in 1979 (Millman, et. al., 1979). The official purpose was "to determine whether USOE is adequately fulfilling its legislative mandate...to provide 'technical and other assistance' for Title I evaluations, and whether the structure and functions of the program should be changed" (Millman, et. al., 1979, p. 5). The following information was collected:

1. Interviews with LEAs, SEAs, TACs, USOE on client needs, TAC activities, TAC relationships with clients and suggestions for the future.
2. Analysis of documents such as TAC final reports, TAC contact logs, and USOE reports.

Results showed that:

1. Content of Contacts. Most emphasis was on general orientation to TIERS, testing and reporting, although there was some assistance on other topics such as JDRP and process evaluation. A little over half of the contacts were primarily for planning (53%).
2. Allocation of Time. About 85% of staff time was spent on technical assistance. Staff development activities took about 10% of staff time. A typical TAC staff person conducted 30 workshops, 35 consultations, 175 telephone calls and 100 letters a year.

3. Variability Across TACs. TACs differed in their relative mix of service delivery modes, in the way staff assignments were made in states (state assignments v. regional assignments), and in the way that contact information was reported to USOE.

4. Reactions of Clients. Client perceptions of TAC services were very positive with respect to services delivered, availability of services, TAC personnel and TAC responsiveness.

5. Cost-Effectiveness. It was impossible to calculate cost-effectiveness because of inconsistent reporting of activities between TACs and because of lack of detailed cost information. Broad calculations showed that costs were not out of line with other technical assistance efforts.

The second outside evaluation of the TACs was done by Millman (1982). The purpose was to present information about the costs and effort of the TACs and to provide guidance for future technical assistance activities. The information collected was:

1. TAC Level of Effort. Information was collected from TAC reports and other documents on such things as overall level of effort and number of visits, field days, clients served and calls per month per professional staff.

2. TAC Costs. TAC expenditures were used to calculate such things as cost per field visit, cost per field hour, cost per client served in the field and cost per client-hour.

3. Interviews with SEAs, LEAs, USED and TACs. These groups were interviewed with respect to level and quality of TAC services, the factors which influence TAC services, and opinions about future directions for technical assistance.

The data collection system upon which this report was based was developed as a result of the problems in the previous system as seen by Millman (1979) and others. The new system was designed to be comparable and comprehensive across TACs.

Results showed that:

1. Level of Service. The overall level of service (in terms of number of field visits, number of calls, and number of clients served) across all TACs increased about 25% between 1979-80 and 1980-81. In 1980-81 there were 3300 site visits, 9500 substantive phone calls, and 46,000 clients served. The average TAC staff member per month made three

visits to the field, had 14 1/2 person-presentation hours, met with 42 clients and had 9 substantive phone calls. About 80% of the clients served were in workshops even though only 38% of the field activities were workshops. These figures varied a lot between TACs. Even though this variation was not seen as a weakness, the overall monthly contact load versus the cost seemed low to the author.

2. Allocation of Effort. About 17% of professional staff time was spent in the field, 14% was spent on the development of materials, 10% was spent on telephone calls and mail, 9% on administering the program, and 6% on staff development. About 44% of staff time was spent on activities not quantifiable by the data collection system (Millman, 1982, p. 5). These activities included such things as preparation for field visits, follow-up from field visits, special projects for clients, and technical investigations.

3. Content. The emphasis on TIERS decreased. For example, aggregating across all TACs, between 1979-80 and 1980-81 the number of TIERS contacts decreased from 27% to 13%, the number of contacts dealing with data collection and analysis (including testing) decreased slightly from 36% to 32%, and the number of contacts dealing with other topics increased from 35% to 54%. This tended to vary somewhat across TACs.

4. TAC Costs. About 45% of TAC allocations were spent on salaries, while about 41% was spent on indirect costs. The remainder was spent on travel, materials, etc. Dividing person-presentation hours by expenditure yielded a figure of about $430 per hour of providing technical assistance. Similar figures for clients showed about $160 per client and $48 per client-hour. Although this was variable across TACs, Millman (1982) felt that these costs were somewhat high.

5. Client Perceptions of TACs. Clients were very happy with the level and kinds of TAC services provided, they corroborate the wide range of topics provided by TACs and agree that content has shifted over time. They typically wanted TAC services to continue in much the same way as before.

Factors Affecting Trends Over Time and Variability in Services

There are several common threads through all of the studies mentioned above. First, there has been a shift in the topics covered in TAC contacts. This shift has alternatively been described (Millman, 1982, p. 28) as from compliance to local use, from product to process, from more emphasis on TIERS to more emphasis on local use and reporting, from basics to quality control and other technical areas, and from

reiteration of rules to dealing with program problems. In general all of these show the shift from TIERS to a broader range of topics. Second, there has been a tremendous increase in the level of service. Third, there has been a general mode shift from workshops to more personal contacts such as on-site and telephone consultations. Finally, there is a great deal of variability between TACs and states in terms of level of service, mode of service delivery and content emphasized. This section will consider the possible forces contributing to each of these findings. Most of the evidence for the contribution of each factor comes from interviews (e.g. those done by Millman, 1982) and TAC opinions concerning their own services. Where hard data is available to suggest a link, the source will be cited.

Topic Shifts. Factors contributing to this effect are:

1. SEA/LEA Factors. SEA/LEA effects noted by Millman (1979, 1982), TAC final reports, Barnes and Ginsburg (1979), Stonehill and Groves (1983) and Arter (1982) include an increase in knowledge about the possibilities of evaluation, a reassertion of interest in individual program improvement once the requirements of TIERS were in place, and increasing skill levels in topics such as testing and data collection. Although these factors can result in different topics being requested by clients, the effect of the above trends is probably more as an interaction with the factors which follow.

2. TAC Factors. There has been a general shift across time in such things as the topics that TAC staff include in technical assistance options, an increasing knowledge of local needs and the context for decision making, an increased sophistication in assisting clients to define their needs, and a general shift in perception of the TAC mission from making sure that the TIERS is in place to promoting local use and quality control.

3. Federal Policy Factors. Even though from the beginning there has been a general policy at the federal level to promote evaluations broader in scope than the TIERS (Stonehill and Groves, 1983; Anderson, et. al., 1979), more vocal statements of this intent did not occur until 1979. In addition, a new compliance topic was added in 1978--sustained effects. This lead to a large emphasis on this topic in 1979-80.

4. Technical Factors. Technical considerations include both advances in technology such as microcomputers, but also increasing knowledge concerning evaluation. For example, many of the technical investigations concerning the TIERS has altered what advise TAC staff give clients. Examples are in the areas of functional level testing, test equating, selecting on the pretest in model A, and recommendations concerning model B.

Increasing Level of Service. Factors contributing to this effect are:

1. SEA/LEA Factors. Clients are now more familiar with TAC as a resource. This includes experience with TACs in terms of responsiveness, quality of assistance, information at the right level of difficulty, technical quality of help and materials, and knowledge that TAC staff are not associated with USED program monitoring.

2. TAC Factors. TACs have contributed to increases in level of service by such organizational features as continuity of TAC staff in a given state and organizing TAC activities so that multiple purposes are served by single trips. In addition, TACs have kept clients aware of service possibilities by using contacts to describe the other services available (creating a snowball effect), by planning regional conferences, and by increasing use of surveys of the evaluation assistance needs of clients.

3. Money. TACs have been able to increase service because of an increase in their funding level. Professional staff FTE increased from 5 (across Regions 8, 9, and 10) in 1976-77 to 28 in 1981-82.

Service Delivery Mode Shift. Factors contributing to this effect are:

1. SEA/LEA Factors. Now that most clients are familiar with the standard body of requirements and concerns of the TIERS, TACs have moved on to more individual concerns. Also, client groups are more familiar with the TACs and the range of services which can be provided.

2. TAC Factors. There has been an evolution in TAC philosophy of how to be effective. This has generally meant increasing face-to-face contact on individual concerns. This is especially true in middle-sized districts which are large enough to desire extra assistance, but too small to have their own resources in terms of time and expertise.

3. Federal Policy Factors. With a decrease in Federal regulation of evaluation, the range of possible interests has increased.

Variability Across States. Factors contributing to this effect are:

1. SEA/LEA Factors. States that are rated by TAC directors as less compliance-oriented and which try the most to improve evaluation at the local level receive more services than states that are more compliance oriented and less helpful to the LEAs (Millman, 1982, p. 21). States with larger Title I student populations receive more TAC visits. When

student population is controlled, states with large Title I populations receive proportionately less field service (Millman, 1982, p. 20;. Size of the state also effects the kinds of services received. Large states receive more assistance at the SEA level and more large-scale regional workshops. Small states have more district contact.

States differ in how the TACs and LEAs are to communicate with each other and in SEA encouragement of TAC participation in their region. Where TACs are allowed to contact LEAs directly there are generally more contacts. If a state already has technical assistance available to LEAs the nature of TAC work is different. Services have to be coordinated and tend to be more at the state level. The technical knowledge at the state level also effects services. For example, in more technically competent states, requests are more technical, and clients are more likely to want finished materials to use in their own training processes. In states with less technical knowledge the TACs would do more of the training.

A final area of SEA effect is in terms of internal organization. For example, if the program office and the evaluation office are separate, the nature of services might differ depending on who is the TAC contact. In addition, such separation often makes communication and coordination more difficult. If the evaluaton section is the TAC contact, requests tend to be more technical (Millman, 1982, p. 43).

If LEAs are medium sized, technical assistance tends to be more varied and less tied to measuring impact. For example, the Region 9 TAC has worked closely with several LEAs in Arizona doing process evaluations on topics identified by the districts themselves. Medium sized LEAs also tend to want to do comprehensive evaluation but may not have the resources to do so. Small LEAs tend to have personnel who have many responsibilities and who want short term help on specific questions having mostly to do with required documentation. Large LEAs tend to have their own research departments and tend to use TACs as consultatnts to discuss current projects such as test equating (Los Angeles Unified) and student selection (Long Beach Unified).

Variability Across TACs. Factors contributing to this effect are:

1. TAC Factors. Even after effects of general trends over time and variability across states are taken into account, there is still variability across TACs in the level and nature of services provided. The technical interests, beliefs, and general technical assistance philosophy of individual TAC personnel can affect the content covered. For example, some TACs are more interested in testing and others are more interested in technical topics. More compliance oriented TACs will emphasize standard topics and ensuring implementation. TAC personnel which have less faith in evaluation tend to emphasize the negative aspects of TIERS. TACs which emphasize quality control and technical conerns tend to work more with SEAs while TACs which emphasize local use tend to work more with LEAs (Millman, 1982, p. 21). TACs which view the models as being of less use emphasize other topics.

   One of the major ways in whcih TACs have differed is their belief in how to make evaluation have local use. In some TACs the approach has been to emphasize local use of TIERS data with special attention to its quality. These TACs provide training on interpreting TIERS results, and good data collection. Other TACs have shifted more to a compromise position. Good qualtiy TIERS data is of importance but sometimes needs to be added to. Also good data sometimes needs to be compromised in the interests of practicality. In this view, the way to increase the usefulness of evaluation is to ensure that it addresses issues of local concern and is practical to implement.

   TACs also differ in their degree of proactivity. That is, some TACs feel more strongly than others that their role is to guide the client in the direction that the TAC feels is most important. Other TACs approach technical assistance from a more responsive viewpoint--assisting clients to attain their own goals and exercising guidance in a more subtle and long-term manner.

What the Data Do Not Show

Although the data examined above document changes in service over time, document TAC, USED and client perceptions of services and suggest some links between services provided, service delivery strategies and forces contributing to change, they lack utility in other areas. First, as we have seen above, most evidence for forces contributing to changing strategies and services comes from opinion. It would be interesting to support these interpretations with more hard data.

Second, even though some attempts have been made in the past to quantify the cost-effectiveness of the TACs, there are major problems with such attempts. The original information collection system was designed to document client contacts not to evaluate TAC effectiveness. Thus, these records do not adequately cover all of TAC activities. For example, using person-presentation time to calculate cost per field hour is slightly misleading because this time does not cover all field time, but only time actually presenting information. Also, Millman (1982) reported that 44% of TAC time is spent on other activities not separately specified by the data collection system he used. These activities include much time spent on preparation for and follow-up from field visits, as well as writing letters, working on special projects for clients and operating clearinghouses. In order to set up a method for examining cost-effectiveness, the possible effects need to be outlined in advance so that information can be collected about them.

In addition to not providing information about certain very important aspects of TAC work, the numbers also do not reflect other broader, less dramatic and more subtle impact of TACs, although some of these points come out in interviews. For example, the numbers do not reflect the increased level of sophistication with regard to evaluation and testing shown by client groups. Specific areas of increasing sophistication mentioned include knowing more about what evaluation is and is not, increasing ability to collect good quality information, and a general increase in ability as an evaluator. Also TAC materials and ideas are being used in programs other than Chapter 1. Examples are the use of TIERS in Indian Education in Arizona and HEDDS in Hawaii. Many people feel that testing practices and appropriate use of test scores in general have improved because of the effect of TACs (Stonehill and Groves, 1983). This includes the impact that TACs have had on the publication of better tests. Since TACs provide services across states, some clients feel that they now have a better idea of what is going on in other states. Regional meetings have also increased discussions between state personnel.

Third, the numbers do not even really show whether TACs have met their official goals of implementing the TIERS, ensuring quality control and promoting local use. Most evidence for this comes from anecdotal records or interviews. With respect to TIERS implementation, complete and aggregatable information has been received from all states in 1979-80. Most states are continuing to turn in data even though it is no longer required. With respect to quality control, examples of impact are in the development of reporting forms and quality control checks which are currently being used in several states, technical investigations of quality issues such as regression to the mean, and out-of-level testing implementation. With respect to promoting local use, change has occured even though it tends to be subtle and gradual (Stonehill and Groves, 1983). Small influences such as the Program Implementation Handbook, time-on-task materials, assistance on state refinement contracts, help with interpreting and displaying results, and working with individual LEAs on specific evaluation questions tend to result ina gradual overall awareness of evaluation use, a changing attitude toward evaluation, and an increased ability to use evaluation.

In sum, TACs have enjoyed a high level of impact and success with clients, much of which is not documented in numbers. Elements of TAC structure which have contributed to this success are also those mentioned by various authors (Millman, 1982) as being important to successful technical assistance and dissemination ventures--a client-centered approach, flexbility in service provision, content and staffing, good needs assessment and awareness approaches, face-to-face contact, responsiveness, an initial focus and impetus for participation, and high quality information and materials. Other important factors are the perception of TACs as a resource not a monitoring agency, and funding which allowed good quality personnel and materials.

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